

National Nursing Week



This photo was taken near a hospital in Kashmir where Carolyn Davies (standing) examines a woman's leg, fractured in the local earthquake. Davies ordered surgery redone to correct a mobility impairment caused by an improper placement of a metal rod on her femur.

Photos: Courtesy of Carolyn Davies



Carolyn Davies in Ghari Dopatta, a town in Kashmir, at the foot hills of the Himalayas. It was in this town that the Canadian DART team built us the field hospital. Behind is a collapsed women's college.

Nursing as a compassionate adventure

Seven months have passed since the massive 7.6 earthquake shook northern Pakistan, devastating extensive areas of Pakistani-administered Kashmir and the North-West Frontier Province. The earthquake has left three million people homeless and 200,000 people injured, forcing them to face the Himalayan winter in temporary shelters and tents.

For Carolyn Davies, a Nurse Practitioner with 35 years experience, the month she spent in the region providing emergency medical aid has left an indelible mark.

"I had always wanted to do this kind of thing since my days as a student nurse. I'm an adventurer at heart and I truly believe that we live in a global village."

The earthquake occurred on October 8, 2005 just before 9 a.m. as children sat in classrooms and men and women went about their workday. Its abrupt, monumental and destructive force brought with it death, injury and misery to millions.

Responding to the call of the Canadian Relief Foundation and the Registered Nurses Association of Ontario (RNAO), Davies offered to serve a month-long stint in the

region. "It's the sort of thing I'd always been interested in. I had done a degree in anthropology which focused on women's and health care issues as well as the issues surrounding transcultural health."

Davies has a history of involvement. In 1981 she traveled with RNAO to China, when it first opened its doors to the outside world, to look at that country's health care system and discovered women with bound feet among other things.

Davies had also worked with First Nations People and was a founding member of Anishnawbe Health Toronto — a community health centre. She and the Anishnawbe team would go out at night to provide services to those who lived on the streets. She was at Oka with the same team during 1990 crisis.

To bring her services to Pakistan, Davies was expected to pay her own way and provide her own sleeping bags and equipment. "I had some generous supporters who helped make it happen," she says.

She left Nov. 25 and flew into the Pakistani capital Islamabad for a few

days of orientation and debriefing by the United Nations. Issues dealt with included security and how to get on and off of a helicopter, which would come in handy.

"We drove in a van to Muz-zafabad, the capital of Kashmir ... it was on the worst-hit fault line in foothills of the Himalayas."

Prior to the earthquake, the city's population had been 195,000. The quake killed more than 45,000, mostly women and children. Those not killed were injured.

In the region overall, more than 80,000 were killed and 100,000 injured. Three million people were left homeless.

"The place was just flattened. To be fair, half of buildings were still standing but others looked like you were walking in a gravel pit."

Davies and the team of three nurses and a physician helped provide wound and nursing care, including infections related to fractures and tissue damage (loss of arms and hands).

"A lot of hospitals were completely damaged and too danger-

ous to work in. One in particular was just partially built but quickly utilized."

What Davies saw there was often beyond belief. "I was treating one

woman's arm and noticed what look like a strange discharge — then I realized it was her exposed bone."

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the profound difference they make in our lives.

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we thank you for your
devotion and care.



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We salute our nurses for
a job well done.

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